

Reconnecting Youth

Brief Description | Recognition | Program IOM | Intervention Type | Content Focus | Protective Factors
Risk Factors | Interventions by Domain | Key Program Approaches | Outcomes | Evaluation Design
Delivery Specifications | Intended Setting | Fidelity | Barriers and Problems | Personnel | Education
Personnel Training | Cost | Intended Age Group | Intended Population | Gender Focus
Replication Information | Contact Information

Program developers or their agents provided the Model Program information below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Reconnecting Youth (RY) is an indicated school-based program for youth in grades 9 to 12 (14 to 18 years of age) at risk for school dropout and exhibit multiple behavior problems. It uses a partnership model involving peers, school personnel, and parents to deliver interventions that address decreased drug involvement, increased school performance, and decreased emotional distress.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The development and framework for RY were largely informed by early descriptive work of Leona Eggert, Ph.D., and her colleagues. Early work identified the vulnerabilities among youth at risk for high school dropout, "skippers," and the co-occurring problem behaviors of school deviance, drug involvement, and depression/suicidal behaviors. Reconnecting Youth was specifically designed to meet the participants' needs for inclusion and excitement while teaching them how to be "winners," stay in control, make wise decisions, and evaluate potential consequences of their choices. The program has been funded for testing by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Education in suburban and urban areas of the Pacific Northwest. A two-semester version of the program, with a parent component, is currently being evaluated with funding from NIDA. RY has been adopted by Texas and Maine as an integral part of statewide prevention programming.

RECOGNITION

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Model Program

National Institute on Drug Abuse, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Programs That Work

Drug Strategies, Inc.: Grade "A" and "A+"



INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE CLASSIFICATION (IOM)

INDICATED

Developed for an indicated audience. Targeted for youth at risk for school dropout and who may exhibit multiple behavior problems such as substance abuse, aggression, depression, or suicide risk behaviors. At risk for school dropout is defined as having fewer than the average number of credits earned for the grade level, high absenteeism, a significant drop in grades, or a history of dropping out of school.

INTERVENTION TYPE

SCHOOL-BASED

CONTENT FOCUS

ALCOHOL, ANTISOCIAL/AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR, ILLEGAL DRUGS, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE, TOBACCO

The program targets general substance use and abuse.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

INDIVIDUAL, FAMILY, PEER, SCHOOL

INDIVIDUAL

- Communicate using self-esteem enhancing talk
- Decisionmaking and the ability to apply it to drug use, school, and mood management
- Personal control, stress, and mood management skills
- Interpersonal communication and negotiation skills

FAMILY

- Practicing interpersonal communication skills at home
- Enlisting parent support for program goals

PEER

- Daily reinforcement of the positive peer group culture norms
- Replacing deviant peer/group belonging with prosocial group behavior

SCHOOL

- Setting norms for and monitoring attendance, achievement, mood, and drug-use control
- School network support
- Facilitating prosocial activities

RISK FACTORS

INDIVIDUAL, FAMILY, PEER, SCHOOL

INDIVIDUAL

- Impulsiveness
- Poor decisionmaking and coping skills
- Uncontrolled emotions
- Learned helplessness
- Low self-worth; deviant self-image
- Poor social/interpersonal skills

FAMILY

- Family distress and serious conflicts
- Poor family-school connections
- Unclear/unfair rules

PEER

- Deviant friends in peer group network
- Peers who skip school and use drugs
- Peers lacking personal goals related to school achievement and attendance
- Susceptibility to negative peer influences

SCHOOL

- Negative view of school experience
- Norms of skipping school
- Substance use at school
- Poor teacher-student relationships
- Low access to help
- Nonparticipation in school activities

INTERVENTIONS BY DOMAIN

INDIVIDUAL, FAMILY, PEER, SCHOOL, COMMUNITY

INDIVIDUAL

- Life/social skills training

FAMILY

- Task-oriented family education sessions to improve family interactions (e.g., parent involvement in program homework assignments, etc.)

PEER

- Alternative/recreational activities
- Peer-resistance education

SCHOOL

- Classroom drug education
- Classroom-based skills development
- Mentoring/tutoring

COMMUNITY

- Multiagency activities and collaboration

KEY PROGRAM APPROACHES

ALTERNATIVE/RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES, COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, COMMUNITY SERVICE, IN-SCHOOL CURRICULA, PARENT-CHILD INTERACTIONS, SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Program strategies used by the Model Program and how they are used:

ALTERNATIVE/RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Social, recreational, and school activities are carried out to foster school bonding and reconnect high-risk youth to school and to health-promoting prosocial activities. These fun activities are alternatives to depression, loneliness, and substance use.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

This program is a partnership among the school, the family, and the community. It requires a community support team that can assist with funding, additional services, linkages with business community, and extra support for crises.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Some of the suggested alternative prosocial activities involve community service.

CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN

Guidelines are presented to plan for and prevent suicide, respond to suicide or accidental death, and use postsuicide interventions.

IN-SCHOOL CURRICULA

Key components are support and caring through group work involving social support and facilitation of a positive peer-group culture and life skills training to foster self-esteem, enhancement, decisionmaking, personal control, and interpersonal communication skills.

The first 10 days of classes focus on getting started and bringing the youth into the purpose of the program through surveys and goal-setting activities.

PARENT-CHILD INTERACTION

Parent involvement is required for student participation and is essential for at-home support of the skills students learn in class. School contact is maintained through notes and calls from teachers who enlist parental support for activities and provide progress reports.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Life skills training is taught to foster self-esteem enhancement, decisionmaking, personal control, and interpersonal communication skills.

HOW IT WORKS

Four key RY components are integrated into the school environment. They include:

- **RY Class**, a core element, is offered for 50 minutes daily during regular school hours for 1 semester (80 sessions) in a class with a student-teacher ratio of 10 or 12 to 1. After a 10-day orientation to the program, approximately 1 month is spent on each of these topics—self-esteem, decisionmaking, personal control, and interpersonal communication.
- **School bonding activities** consisting of social, recreational, school, and weekend activities that are designed to reconnect students to school and health-promoting activities as alternatives to drug involvement, loneliness, and depression.
- **Parental involvement**, required for student participation, is essential for at-home support of the skills students learn in RY class. School contact is maintained through notes and calls from teachers who also enlist parental support for activities and provide progress reports.
- **School Crisis Response** planning provides teachers and school personnel with guidelines for recognizing warning signs of suicidal behaviors and suicide prevention approaches.

From planning through implementation of the RY curriculum, partnerships with school officials are vital. Typical partners include the RY teacher, RY coordinator, parents, designated district representative, the principal, vice principal, student support services, staff, and administrative support staff—especially attendance and registrar. Regular meetings to ensure readiness, commitment, and financial resources will help set a strong foundation for successful replication.

OUTCOMES

DECREASES IN SUBSTANCE USE, REDUCTIONS IN BEHAVIORS RELATED TO RISK FACTORS, IMPROVEMENTS IN BEHAVIORS RELATED TO PROTECTIVE FACTORS, OTHER TYPES OF OUTCOMES

DECREASES IN SUBSTANCE USE

Curbed progression of alcohol and other drug use

Decreased drug use and control problems

54% decrease in hard drug use

Decreased adverse drug use consequences

REDUCTIONS IN BEHAVIORS RELATED TO RISK FACTORS

Decreased suicidal behaviors (threats, thoughts, and attempts)

Decreased anxiety

32% decline in perceived stress

Decreased depression and hopelessness

48% decrease in anger control problems and aggression

IMPROVEMENTS IN BEHAVIORS RELATED TO PROTECTIVE FACTORS

18% improvement in grades in all classes

Curbed increasing trend in daily class absences

7.5% increase in credits earned per semester

Decreased high school dropout

23% increase in self-efficacy

OTHER TYPES OF OUTCOMES

Benefits

Improved grades and school attendance

Reduced drug involvement

Decreased emotional distress

Increased self-esteem, personal control, prosocial peer bonding, and social support

EVALUATION DESIGN

A quasi-experimental design with repeated measures was used to test the efficacy of the RY indicated preventive intervention. Trend analyses served to compare the pattern of change for experimental and control groups across pre- and posttests (5 months) and followup tests (5 to 7 months).

DELIVERY SPECIFICATIONS

5–24 WEEKS

Amount of time required to deliver the program to obtain documented outcomes:

The RY class is held 50 minutes daily during regular school hours for 1 semester (80 sessions) in a class with a student-teacher ratio of 12 students to 1 teacher.

The first 10 sessions are used to orient and survey youth and set goals.

RY Class, a core element, is offered for 50 minutes daily during regular school hours for 1 semester (80 sessions).

INTENDED SETTING

URBAN, SUBURBAN

Developed for urban and suburban settings.

FIDELITY

Components that must be included in order to achieve the same outcomes cited by the developer:

- Partnership with school officials throughout the entire project, from planning through implementation, is essential.
 - Implementers must be invited, not assigned, and must be highly motivated.
 - Participants are identified and invited, not assigned.
 - Participants are recruited from the entire school population to ensure diversity of age and culture.
 - Classes are about 10 to 12 youth each. (It cannot be integrated into existing larger classes.)
 - Implementers must be trained in using the curriculum.
-

PERSONNEL

FULL-TIME

One full-time program coordinator per every five to six classes is needed to provide teacher support and consultation through bimonthly meetings and weekly classroom observations. Ideally, the coordinator is a skilled Reconnecting Youth teacher.

A typical RY class has a student-teacher ratio of 10 or 12 to 1.

EDUCATION

UNDERGRADUATE, GRADUATE, SPECIAL SKILLS

Teachers with an undergraduate degree or higher.

Teachers are selected, using preestablished criteria, to ensure they are committed to working with high-risk youth and show special aptitude based on student, other teacher, and administrative recommendations, with supervisory and training expertise.

PERSONNEL TRAINING

Type: WORKBOOK, Location: ONSITE (user)/OFFSITE (developer or trainer location),
Length: BASIC/REFRESHER (if required)

Initial implementation training lasts 5 days, with followup implementation consultation 1 day every 6 months during the first year of implementation, plus phone consultation.

One-year followup consultation to manage implementation challenges and to assess implementation fidelity in subsequent years.

Implementation Manual contains chapter on planning and preparation that includes key issues to consider in the initial planning phases through implementation of the partnership model; information about the program concept and research; an overview of the program; information for the group leader; and planning tools such as a Master Planning Tool and an Implementation Checklist.

COST (estimated in U.S. dollars)

\$5,001–10,000

Cost considerations for implementing this program as recommended by the developer:

In addition to the teacher and program coordinator, the teacher needs a classroom large enough to accommodate 10 to 12 students.

TRAINING

5 days in length, for 5 to 7 people, 1 trainer \$750/day plus expenses

5 days in length, 8 to 14 people, 2 trainers \$1,500/day plus expenses

Followup consultation days for 5 to 7 people \$750

MATERIALS

Reconnecting Youth: A Peer Group Approach
to Building Life Skills—curriculum, with student
handouts for photocopying \$179

Teacher manuals and reproducible forms book only \$69

Classroom materials sold separately in sets of five

Parent training video \$49.95

Sets of support materials sold separately in packages
of five and more (charms, stickers, magnets, memo pads,
pencils, pins, signs, self-inking stamps, and T-shirts) \$15–\$22.50

INTENDED AGE GROUP

EARLY ADOLESCENT (12–14), TEENAGER (15–17), YOUNG ADULT (18–24)

Developed for high school youth in grades 9 to 12 (14 to 18 years of age).

INTENDED POPULATION

MULTIPLE ETHNIC GROUPS

Used with diverse populations.

GENDER FOCUS

BOTH GENDERS

Developed for both males and females.

REPLICATION INFORMATION

NO INFORMATION PROVIDED

CONTACT INFORMATION

ABOUT THE DEVELOPER

The developer is Leona Eggert, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, at the University of Washington School of Nursing. Liela Nicholas is co-developer and principal trainer. Materials are distributed by Solution Tree.

FOR INFORMATION, CONTACT

Beth McNamara, MSW
Information and Training Coordinator
Phone: (425) 861-1177
Fax: (206) 726-6049 - Email: ry.info@verizon.net

National Educational Service
304 West Kirkwood Avenue, Suite 2
Bloomington, IN 47404-5132
Phone: (800) 733-6786
Fax: (812) 336-7790
Web: www.solution-tree.com